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OUR DEAD.

Anna Maryanna Sulzer

A Sermon.

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• ALL is dying : hearts are breaking
Which to ours were once fast bound,
And the lips have ceased from speaking
Which once utter'd such sweet sound,
And the arms are powerless lying
Which were our support and stay,
And the eyes are dim and dying
Which once watch'd us night and day.

Every thing we love and cherish
Hastens onward to the grave;
Earthly joys and pleasures perish,
And whate'er the world e'er gave.
Yet, unchanged while all decayeth,
Jesus stands upon the dust;
“LEAN ON ME ALONE,” he sayeth,
“HOPE, AND LOVE, AND FIRMLY TRUST.”

Lyra Domestica.

Our Dead.

“Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.”—REV. xiv. 13.

THE DEAD! THE DEAD! How large the congregation of them! THE REIGN OF DEATH! Alas, what a reign! Who can describe it? We are all members of circles in which that despot's doings have been felt! Whether rich or poor, we all have property in the grave. Like Abraham, we all have claims upon the land; for we each have laid some friend or loved one in its dust.

“There is no flock, however watch'd and tended,
But one dead lamb is there;
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But hath one vacant chair.”

No age, no sex, no possession, no station in life, is proof against death. The babe just entering into the world; the infant on its mother's breast; the child playing with its toys; the boy just opening into adolescence; the young man of talent, promise, and joyous parental hope; the daughter in all the loveliness of culture, grace, beauty, and virtue; the happy bride, the delight of her husband; the indulgent parent, on whom the comforts of home depend; the

philanthropist, whose steps are music in the ears of woe; the minister of truth, loving and beloved, with manly eloquence redolent of heaven; the powerful statesman, on whose wisdom the nation leans; the hoary saint, whose head is silvered with a life of labor and suffering for God; the venerable patriarch, who has been long a pilgrim in the ways of righteousness: each represents a class from which death has snatched, and is ever snatching, his victims!

“Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of trouble.” “As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.” “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.” Our life is but a battle with death, in which, sooner or later, he is certain to conquer. Neither is there any discharge in this war. The memorials of the accumulating victories of this king of terrors throng our paths whithersoever we go. We look around us, and here is a child with the plaintive cry, “My father is dead!” and there the orphan-asylum, good and blessed, but telling sadly of the ravages of unrelenting death. We look again, and behold the widow in her sable dress, the sister in mourning for her sister gone or her brother in his grave, the gloomy hearse, the funeral procession, the undertaker’s warehouse, the shop stored with mournings, the mason chiseling epitaphs! Around our churches lie the crowded grave-yards, and all the highways are lined

with cemeteries, and depositories of the dead. Every newspaper has its obituary list, and every month brings forth its bills of mortality. Nations are concerned about the health of their citizens, and are oft engaged in reckoning up the number of persons dying in their towns. Sanitary commissions and health-officers are constituted by governments, and parliaments legislate about death. Physicians are sent out by hundreds from our colleges and universities, and thousands in all sections of the world are employed in collecting and preparing medicines for the sick; but, like an irresistible conqueror, the pale slayer of men laughs at all efforts to intercept his march, and triumphantly overleaps whatever barriers may be thrown in his way. Various, also, are the methods of his approach. Sometimes, like a cowardly assassin, he enters the happy dwelling unperceived, and strikes down his victim unawares. Sometimes he comes like a grim tyrant, with plague and pestilence as his alarming heralds. And sometimes, like a hungry Moloch, eager for a royal feast, he stalks by the side of Mars, and drinks his fill of blood upon the broad battle-field. But, in some form, his sceptre is swayed over land and sea, and both are filled with the conquered subjects of his gloomy realm.

It is not, therefore, a matter of surprise or wonder that, in the eleven months during which I have been absent, death should have shown his power within the large circle of this congregation, or that some should have fallen a prey to the grave even within the very short period that has elapsed since

my return. I look around upon this assembly, and more than one familiar face do I miss; and places I behold vacant which shall know their former occupants no more; and the drapery of mourning I see upon many who sorrow for their recent dead. Could I not name widowed hearts which have been forced within the year to resign their husbands to the grave; and parents whose little ones have been wrested from them to sleep their last sleep in little grassy beds; and children and grandchildren who have been called on to yield their aged treasures to the insatiable tomb; and brothers, and sisters, and most intimate friends, who have been separated from each other by the ruthless hand of the great devastator of the earth! Even in the brief space of a week, since we last met in this house, it has been my sad duty to commit the bodies of two of our friends and fellow-worshipers to the dark and chilly sepulchre:—one, a sister, born of parents among the first and long among the most active of the members of St. John's, nurtured in a home of piety, noted for her kindness, her warm affection for her friends, her earnest devotion to her church, her interest in and prompt attention to all the public services of religion, and in many things a model for the imitation of all related to her or acquainted with her; the other, a mother, kind, affectionate, and good, long oppressed with infirmity, but snatched away with suddenness from the presence and the affection of her family. And hearts now before me, more than I may know of, perhaps are throbbing and bleeding, as I speak, over the doings and

triumphs of death among those whom they loved and cherished.

But, amid this universal carnage, and this sorrowing for friends departed, how beautiful and impressive the words of the text! They fall like the gentle rain upon the mown grass, and distil as the dew,—as the small rain upon the tender herb. “*Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them!*” How terse and emphatic this language! How pointed, authoritative, and powerful, with all its gentle sweetness! What positive knowledge it bespeaks! How it draws the veil away to disclose to bereaved hearts the state of their dead, giving assurances beyond all ability of unaided mind to give!

You stand by the couch of the dying one; you converse with him; but presently his power to command his thoughts or express his feelings wanes and departs, and the signs of speedy dissolution appear. You gaze in solemn silence. There is the changed countenance, the sinking down into the heaviness of death, the convulsive struggle, or the easy sleeping away of life. The animate body resigns its power of motion and becomes cold and stiff. Death has taken the place of life! Just now you were near to that loved one; but henceforward you call him *departed*. There is distance and separation between you and that friend now. He is gone. You may hold his pulseless hand; but he is gone. You may look upon his features, and kiss his lips; but he is

gone. You may surround his remains with every demonstration of your deep and tender affection; but no fond acknowledgment, or flush of grateful feeling and corresponding emotion, greets you in return. *He has gone!* And there comes up the great question, *Whither* has he gone? What is his estate, now that he has bid farewell even to the dearest of his earthly friends, and to all his earthly possessions? "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof shall not cease; but man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost, and *where is he?*" Reason and affection bend down their ears to the earth, and ask, and listen, yet no answer comes to break the deep silence of the grave. But faith lifts up her eyes, and a voice from heaven says, "*Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.*"

I. Death, then, is not annihilation. Though the animation of the body be suspended, and the whole material frame yield to decay, the living powers are not destroyed. There still must be existence, or there can be no blessedness. Lazarus and the rich man *died*, but that was not the end of them. We still read of the one in "Abraham's bosom," and the other in burning flames. The Saviour assures us that there is something in man which they that kill the body cannot kill. Paul tells us of an "inner man," which faints not even though the "outward man" perish. When David's child died, the same was still somehow preserved in being, so that the king

could say he should yet “*go to him.*”* When the first saints of the early times died, they had not so disappeared, that their believing children could not be *gathered to them*, even as Jacob “yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.” (Gen. xlix. 33.) “This, therefore,” as a valuable old theologian has said, “must be laid down as a certain and necessary truth, that the soul of man dieth not when he dieth, but returneth unto Him that gave it, to be disposed of at His will and pleasure.”†

II. Neither is death a descent to a condition of unconscious sleep. Such a state is as incompatible with blessedness as a cessation of existence.‡ According

* “The meaning of this declaration (2 Sam. xii. 23) is something more than his merely following his child to the grave, his merely dying like him or resting his body in the same locality. It means that he himself should follow his child, in due time, into the appointed locality which must receive the souls of all, when dead:—a literal going of the father to the child into that region of departed spirits, in opposition to a literal coming back of the child to the father in this world.”—*Greswell*.

† Pearson on *The Creed*, Art. 5.

‡ “In the estimation of those who are of opinion that a given individual soul, though essentially different from a given individual body, loses all sense of its being by the act of dying, and recovers it only by the act of rising again, the intermediate state is little better than an empty name. In the sound and orthodox meaning of the terms, the intermediate state is the state of the soul, in her condition of disunion from the body, and until her reunion to it;—a *condition*, not simply a mere lapse or transition of time of such and such an extent, but a *life*, or positive existence of one kind or another, for the same length of time.”—*Greswell on the Parables*.

to the Saviour's words, uttered from the cross, the pious dead are "*in Paradise.*"* Paradise conveys the idea of a garden, a place of delights and pleasures, comforts and joys. People do not go to gardens to sleep, but for walks, and for active enjoyments. What is a garden to a man whose senses are all locked in sleep? The cell, and the place of utter darkness, would suit him quite as well. The rich man and Lazarus were not asleep after death. The rich man remembered and spoke, and felt himself tormented, and Lazarus was assigned a place in some world of living beings, where he was "comforted." The scriptural declaration that the pious dead are present with Christ, also carries with it strong proof that theirs is not a life of unconsciousness. How can there be presence with Christ to souls that are asleep? What blessing can there be in presence with one of whose nearness we have no sense or knowledge? Presence, in its proper sense, implies consciousness and communion. And if to be present with the Lord is as delightful and desirable as Paul represents, it must be a conscious presence, involving the activity of powers to see, know, enjoy, and rejoice in the blessed Saviour.† Death is really a mere transition

* The ancient Fathers uniformly speak of the intermediate state under this scriptural name. See Tertul. de Paradiso, in Lib. de Anima, c. 55; Origen de Princ. l. 2, v. fin.; Chrysost. Hom. 1 and 11, de Cruc. et Latron. § 2; Prudent. pro Exeg. def. Cathem. x. 151.

† Jesus said to the penitent thief, "To-day shalt thou be *with me,*" Luke xxiii. 43. On this, Stier remarks, "Let us single out

of the soul from one sphere and state to another,—the mere transfer of the believer from earth's labors and pains to paradisaic rest and joys. It is only the body—the mere tabernacle of the spirit—which descends to the tomb and sees corruption. The real man lives on, not only unhindered in his affections and enjoyments, but transported to a realm of purer, deeper love and much higher bliss.

We are apt to speak of the dead in tones and terms which imply pity and regret, not only with reference to *our loss*, but also involving more or less the alteration which death has wrought in *their condition*. This is human nature, but not the strain in which the Scriptures speak, at least with respect to the pious dead. Their tone is that of gain and victory. Here we are in the mere infancy of our being,—in the mere rudimental period of our existence; and the interval between death and the resurrection, so far from being a blank, or a triumph of the powers of darkness over God's people, has become, under Christ, only another higher and happier stage in the glorious progress towards the sublime heights of final maturity and eternal blessedness. By means of death, Lazarus is brought from a condition of beggary and suffering, to the society of Abraham and the "comfort" of heaven. Paul tells of a putting off of "the flesh" to "depart and be with Christ," which he pronounces

and mark carefully the *μετ' εμου εση*—*with me*. This word witnesses (as does the whole Scripture) against any intermediate sleep of the soul."—*Words of Jesus*, in loc.

“far better” than to “abide in the flesh,” however much it might conduce to the “furtherance and joy of faith.” And so fully was he persuaded of the happy condition of those who depart hence in the Lord, that he wrote to his brethren, “*We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*” All this is in radical disagreement with the idea of unconscious sleep, and implies a susceptibility of enjoyment, life, and love, undamaged by death, and unextinguishable by the damp and darkness of the tomb.

III. *Where* the deceased saints are, we cannot tell. As yet, it is our privilege only to “know in part.” But some particular locality seems to be assigned them. It may be in accommodation to human weakness, and owing to our inability to conceive of it in any other way, but the Scriptures everywhere seem to attach the idea of *place* to the receptacle of departed spirits. Paradise denotes a *place* as well as a *state*. If the soul exists at all after death, it must occupy some point in space. Whether near at hand, or far removed from earth, God has *somewhere* prepared a local abode, suitable in beauty and magnificence for the comfort of his people, into which also those of them who have gone hence have been gathered, and where they joyously rest in communion with Christ, awaiting the day of the full consummation of their bliss.* Our eyes cannot see that place, but

* The Fathers speak of the pious dead, as “at rest in a hidden

our souls are ever dreaming and prophesying about it, and the Scriptures tell of it as a thing of undoubted existence and exalted happiness. It is not the final home of the departed. None of the saints have as yet entered into their ultimate dignity and glory.* There are to be "new heavens" as well as a "new earth." Those new heavens have yet to come, as also the kingdom in which the saints are to reign. Their bodies, by the resurrection and glorification of which they can alone be fitted for their eternal regencies, still corrupt and waste in the grave. And their whole estate is, as yet, but intermediate, and measurably imperfect. It is a state of separation and waiting for

receptacle" (Aug. Euch. c. 108; de Civ. Dei, xii. 9);—as "in the keeping of the Lord" (id. in Ps. 53, § 10; Ps. 120, § 16);—as "in an invisible place appointed them by God" (Iren. v. 31);—as "somewhere in a better place, as the bad in a worse, awaiting the day of judgment" (Justin M. Dial. § 5);—as "cherished in peaceful abodes" (Zeno de Res. l. i. Tr. 6, § 2). See the passages quoted in *Pearson On the Creed*, Art. 5.

* The Fathers mostly express themselves to the effect, that even the apostles and patriarchs are not yet crowned (Chrys. Hom. 28 in Heb. xi.; Hom. 39 in 1 Cor. § 4; Theodoret in Heb. xi.; Origen in Lev. Hom. vii.; Euthym. in Luc. 23);—that they wait for us (Origen in Lev. l. c.; Ambrose de Bono Mort. c. 10; Greg. Nyss. de Hom. Opif. c. 22; Theod. & Theoph. ad loc. Arethas. l. c.);—that reward does not come for any before the resurrection (Ter. de An. c. 55; adv. Marc. iv. 34);—that "the good, beholding their way to eternal life more clearly, as being near it, praise the gifts of the Godhead, and exult with a divine joy; not now fearing that they should turn aside to evil, but well knowing that they *shall have* safely and forever the good things laid up." (Pseudo-Dionys. Eccl. Hier. i. 7.) *Vide Dodgson's Tertullian*, vol. i. p. 117.

the resurrection, and, with the resurrection, for the fulness of their portion with Christ in his kingdom and glory. But it is, withal, a happy place, and a happy state; for the dead which die in the Lord are "*blessed*."

IV. And this blessedness is immediate and perpetual. There are no lingering purgatorial pains to be encountered first. Christ says to the dying penitent, "*To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*"* In Paul's

* "Some would remove the stop, and place it after *to-day*, and read the words thus, *I say unto thee to-day*; as if Christ only signified the time when he said this, and not when the thief should be with him in Paradise: which, besides being senseless and impertinent, and only contrived to serve an hypothesis, is not agreeable to Christ's usual way of speaking, and is contrary to all copies and versions."—(*Gill's Comment. in loc.*) "Olshausen almost ridicules this superficial view, according to which the Lord only meant to say, *I to-day say unto thee that thou shalt one day enter Paradise*. The simple *to-day* is to be taken in its plain literalness."—(*Stier, in loc.*) "It is not to be joined to the verb *I say*, as if the robber should have to wait for his entrance into Paradise, during I know not how long periods of time. That the words were spoken to him on that day, is of itself evident, without it being necessary to say so. Therefore we must read the words thus:—*To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*. Thus the power and grace of the Lord, and also his own ready and immediate entrance into Paradise, are openly declared."—(*Bengel's Gnomon, in loc.*)

"That word, *to-day*, contains a body of divinity. It tells us that the very moment a believer dies, his soul is in happiness and safe keeping. His full redemption is not yet come. His perfect bliss will not begin before the resurrection morning. But there is no mysterious delay, no season of suspense, no purgatory, between his death and a state of reward. In the day that he breathes his last, he goes to Paradise."—(*Ryle, in loc.*)

view, absence from the body is equivalent to presence with the Lord. That which brings about the one necessarily introduces the other. Lazarus at death found himself at once in "Abraham's bosom." And once in heaven, always in heaven. There may be changes, but only from one degree or sphere of blessedness to another. This is what many interpreters understand by the words, "Blessed *from henceforth*;" that is, blessed, not only from the time of the hearing of the voice, else the implication would be that the pious who died before that time had not been blessed, nor yet only from the time to which the connected predictions refer, much as the happiness and exaltation of the holy dead shall be increased in those days of reward for the saints; but blessed from the moment of decease, and continually blessed thenceforward forever. And if the allusion should even be to something peculiar, and specially appertaining to the times of tribulation yet to come, or to those who then shall suffer for their faith, the declaration must still include the state of the faithful in the interval between death and resurrection, as well as their final glory and rewards.*

* "It is not easy to assign a fit meaning to ἀπ' ἄρτι—*from henceforth*. That it belongs to the former sentence, not τῷ the following one, is, I conceive, plain. And, thus joined with the former sentence, it must express some reason why this blessedness is to be more completely realized from this time when it is proclaimed than it was before. Now, this reason will quickly appear if we consider the particular time in connection with which the proclamation is made. The harvest of the earth is about to be reaped, the vintage of the earth to be gathered. At this time it is that the complete

V. Observe, however, that there is a limitation connected with this joyous declaration. The blessedness

blessedness of the holy dead commences: when the garner is filled and the chaff cast out. And that, not on account of deliverance from any purgatorial fire, but because of the completion of this number of their brethren, and the full capacities of bliss brought in by the resurrection.”—*Alford, in loc.*

Another valuable commentator remarks on the text: “So consolatory are these words, that there is a natural tendency to apply them to the saints of Christ who have fallen asleep in him, ever since the words were penned. But that,” he says, “is not legitimate. The saying comes in chronologically: it follows the third angel’s message. It applies to the times when the Wild Beast is raging and destroying Christ’s people. . . . The peculiar blessedness of these peculiarly-trying saints seems to be, that their resurrection follows almost instantly on their departure.”—*The Apocalypse Expounded.* (See text.)

There doubtless is a large amount of truthfulness in both of these statements; but we cannot accept either as the exclusive meaning of the passage. Both of them locate the particular blessedness of the persons referred to *in the resurrection*, whereas the text says not one word about resurrection. The blessedness announced is the blessedness of “*the dead*” simply *as dead*, and not as resurrected. And if the glory of resurrection and reward be embraced, as it may be, still it is only as *anticipatively enjoyed* in the state which intervenes between death and the resurrection. The latter part of the verse affirms of “the dead in the Lord,” that they *are at present*, in their estate as dead ones, in a condition of blessedness, and blessed in that they *do rest*, from the moment of their decease onward. The last tribulation may be of so severe a character that for the pious to be dead at the time will be a blessed privilege; and the “henceforth” may have something specific in that regard; but it is nevertheless in their estate as pious dead that the blessedness holds, whilst the succeeding declarations widen out beyond such limits, and supply us with cheering information respecting the pious dead of all ages and from amid all conditions of the world, which always hates the good.

announced belongs exclusively to "*the dead which die in the Lord.*" Not all the dead are happy, but only those of them who have made Christ their hope, and have been incorporated into him by a true repentance and a living faith. Though Lazarus is "comforted," the rich worldling is "tormented." There is a state of nature, which is *without* Christ, and a state of unbelief, which rejects Christ, and a state of disobedience, which vitiates all claim to hope in Christ; and those whom death has taken in either of these states are not at all partakers of the Christian's portion. Some have their "good things" in this life, and have nothing good for the life to come. But there is another and better state,—a state of humble, active faith and union with Jesus,—which is called being *in Christ*, hidden with him, crucified with him, buried with him, and made alive with him in a new being of righteousness. To die in such a state is to "die in the Lord;" that is, to die in the faith of Christ, resting in the merit of his death for pardon and eternal life, and through the influence of such a faith found steadfast, earnest, and faithful at the post of duty. Such are blessed even in this life. They are blessed with the favor of God, with the consolations and helps of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, with the sympathy of Jesus, and with the divine assurances of all needful grace and everlasting bliss. Hence their songs of praise and gratitude even along the toilsome way of their pilgrimage, their expressions of joy and wonder at the graciousness of God, their look of satisfaction and triumph amid all their trials, their sweet submission to what-

ever God appoints, their visions of celestial glory and their cheer of soul as if listening already to the very melody of heaven. Hence they can look upon death, and say, "*Where is thy sting?*" and upon the grave, and exclaim, "*Where is thy victory?*" But death introduces them to a far higher blessedness.

VI. Of this blessedness the text furnishes us two specifications. The voice says, Write them blessed, first, because "*they do rest from their labors;*" and second, because "*their works do follow them.*" He who came down from heaven to be the Saviour of men commenced his addresses with the words, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest for your souls." Precious promise! *Rest! Rest! Rest!* Not the rest of mere inaction, but rest as opposed to perturbing anxiety, disquiet, fatigue, labor, and suffering. In the present life we all have trials and afflictions. To the outward beholder, some may appear to be free from the general rule; but "Each heart knoweth its own bitterness." In the world we must have tribulation. But death puts an end to the good man's griefs, vexations, trials, and toils. Those who "die in the Lord" do rest from all such afflictions. The days of their mourning are ended. They are "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." They have done with the turmoil and the suffering of this present world. Having fought the good fight, and kept the faith, they have finished

their course, and entered into their repose. The last storm has been weathered, the last sigh has been heaved, the last tear has been shed and wiped away. *They do rest from their labors.* Like the mariner who has entered the desired haven, after having been long tossed and driven by the tempests and billows of the ocean; like the soldier who has forever come away from the battle-field and the scenes of strife, passion, and blood, to the quiet and joy of peace; like the traveller who has been long wandering through inhospitable lands and returned at last to his own loved home: so the dead in Christ do “rest from their labors.” Their whole being reposes in heavenly calm and joyous peace, far exceeding all the bliss ever to be experienced on earth. Yes,

“Happy the dead! they peacefully rest them.

From burdens that gall'd, from cares that opprest them;—

From yoke of the world, and from tyranny,

The grave, the grave, can alone set free,—

The grave can alone set free.”

“*And their works do follow them.*” When the righteous die, they must leave much behind them; but they still take much with them. Their good characters, and the fruits of them, continue to be their joyous possession. It is not by works that heaven is purchased. We are redeemed only by the precious blood of Christ. But the Christian's character and works must add immeasurably to the joys and honors of his portion in eternity. There are sublime mountains, springing from the plains of common salvation, toward whose grand summits

Christians rise in proportion to their labors, their self-denials, and their sufferings for Christ. With all the freeness of the gospel offers, and though it is only by grace that we are saved, there is yet an important sense, not to be lost sight of, in which we shall reap exactly as we have sowed. *Salvation* is by the free grace of God, accepted and confided in; but *rewards* are all according to what we have *done*; for Christ shall "render to every man according as *his work* shall be." Out of much service shall come much honor, and out of patient effort everlasting glory. Yea, heaven's crowns are wrought of earth's deeds of faith and love; and blessed are the pious dead, for their works do follow them! God hath bottled their tears, and noted every gift, even of a cup of cold water given in his name. Nor shall one act of charity or goodness, on the part of his people, ever lose its reward. Not till the resurrection shall they enter in full upon that reward; but from the day the pious soul is launched into eternity, it is blessed with the consciousness that its works are remembered, and that reward for them shall come.

Such, then, in brief, is the estate of those of our friends who have gone hence in the Lord. Their sufferings and sorrows are over. Their toils have ended. They have entered into rest; and their works do follow them, to augment their bliss and increase their everlasting exultation.

VII. And among the number of those who have gone to their graves from among us within the past eleven

months, I am sure there were those who were "in the Lord," and who died in the Lord. I have not the time or strength to refer specially to all of them now. I will specify but one, whose death I announced to you a week ago, and at whose funeral, since we last met in this place, I did not feel able properly to say what I desired. I refer to our friend and sister, *Anna Margareta Sulger*, whom God has seen fit to call away from among us to serve and enjoy him in a better world.

To the depth of her piety, the earnestness of her faith, and the remarkable amiability of her character, it affords me great satisfaction to bear my testimony. Of her love for her church, its pastors, and its services, I have had ample proofs. Her faithfulness and affection, as a daughter, sister, and friend, no one acquainted with her life can doubt. Her activity in Christian efforts for the good of others is amply attested in the history of the various societies connected with our congregation:—the Sunday-school, in which she long served as teacher and directress; the Dorcas association, of which she was for years the president; the Missionary and Tract Society, in whose interest it was her delight to labor; and all the enterprises undertaken by her church. And her diary shows her to have been one of those peaceful and grateful spirits, alive to all the numerous mercies of God, and easily overflowed with thankfulness.

She was a woman of deep conscientiousness and fervent prayer. "It is my earnest wish to live ever as in God's sight, and to be approved by Him who alone

gives life," are her words, solemnly written down on a day which commemorated her birth. At another time she wrote, "It is my daily prayer that my faith in my Saviour may be a strong, living faith; that I may from my heart say, 'It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth to him good.'"

"May I endeavor to be useful, and to follow my Saviour's example, in going about doing good!" "God grant me grace that I may ever live in Thy fear, and prove myself a faithful steward of the many gifts with which I am blessed!" And the very last entry which she made in her diary contains this record:—"It is my purpose to live close to God, and to pray for his guidance in all the affairs of life. I wish to say from my heart, in all events, 'Thy will be done.'"

Such utterances, resolves, and prayers, in the secrecy of the closet, and so solemnly recorded for her own eye alone, could only come from a heart deeply imbued with the Spirit of God, and in familiar communion with the things which accompany salvation. They give forth a fragrance of meek and earnest piety, which well may make us think of her now as having gone to join the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven.

"As the dove to its sheltering nest,
When the storm on the hills is abroad,
So her spirit has flown from this world of unrest,
To repose on the bosom of God."

From this subject, then, let us learn to be reconciled to our lot as mortals. There is an uneradicable

dislike of death in man, and well may be; for death is part of God's great curse upon sin. But still, under Christ, it can work no ill to the righteous, and must needs, like all other things, be to the advantage of them that love God. If we only learn to live for Christ, and seek earnestly to be in Christ, to die will be our gain. If we only

“Steer toward the haven trustfully,
The grave shall a gate of triumph be,
Shall a gate of triumph be.”

At the same time, let us learn from this subject to be thankful for the revelation we have concerning the world to come. “Thanks, everlasting thanks, to my Saviour, Jesus Christ, who has brought life and immortality to light, that I can now think of my dear departed brother as in the company of my sainted parents and former pastor, worshipping before the throne of God and the Lamb!” So did our departed sister write at a time when sorely stricken with bereavement. And well may we join in the same grateful strain for the same gracious and consolatory light.

Still further, let us learn from this subject how accordant it is with the spirit of the Scriptures for us to think much about the portion that awaits the pious after death. Much advantage must also result from devout meditations upon our future rest. It helps to take away the sting of earthly sorrows, to lighten earthly toil, and to make us hopeful and happy in the midst of our trials and days of darkness. It is by this means that we learn to triumph

over death, and to "lay hold on eternal life." "*Look on heaven!*" "*Look on heaven!*" was the admonition of the mother of the heroic Maccabees to her sons, when she sought to strengthen their hearts as they were led forth to martyrdom. And one reason why some do not find greater strength and triumph in the day of trial is, that they do not look enough on heaven.

And, in conclusion, let us call to mind, in this connection, how rapidly we are all approaching the end of our days on earth. Here every thing is transient, and nothing lasts. "*Fading away,*" is one of the songs which the world gayly sings, but which is full of solemn truth and startling meaning. Our friends die, and we die also. Yea, "we all do fade as a leaf." Our life, what is it? It is but "a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Let us think of this, and be moved to prepare ourselves accordingly. Happy as they are who "die in the Lord," "There is no peace," saith my God, "to the wicked." Our rest and life are in Jesus, and must be sought in him, and can only be secured by faith in his blood, and a life conformed to his life. By all that is sacred and blessed, then, let not any one sin or trifle away the opportunities we possess. Heaven's doors are thrown open to us, and eternity's treasures of blessedness are within our reach; and may God help us against neglect and unbelief! Amen, and amen.